

## **COGNITIONS, PRACTICAL SKILLS AND EMOTIONS INVOLVED IN BUILDING OF PERSONAL EFFICIENCY FOR TEACHING CAREER**

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*Abstract: Building personal efficiency for any career, in general, and for teaching in particular, is a process that is structured over time. It is based initially on the projection of some cognitive, emotional and behavioral capacities that have been tested until the option for training in this profession, is influenced by the attitudes and skills that have been proven until then and by the attribution tendencies that the subjects have. This paper aims to analyze the important criteria underlying the construction of self-efficacy for the didactic profession of students. The results obtained on a group of 139 students indicate that a relatively high level of perceived efficiency is based predominantly on emotional and attitudinal factors, and less on their cognitive abilities, or on their skills. Also, the high perception of this perception is achieved through the tendency of externalizing the perceived vulnerabilities and internalizing the credits for success.*

*Keywords: self-efficacy, cognition, attitudes, emotions, attributions*

### **1. Introduction**

As a general principle, personal effectiveness is one of the most powerful predictors of future actions, an important condition for hiring on a certain professional route but also a continuous improvement factor in the chosen field. Introduced by Bandura, on the line of social cognitive theory "self-efficacy consists of the beliefs and / or perceptions that individuals have on their potential to develop any type of activity" (Bandura 1997), which can be translated into coordinates such as the self- reflexive ability to influence the course of the action, a cognitive mechanism that mediates between knowledge and action, and defines together with other factors, the success of its own actions", is rather a metacognitive ability.

Because the actions performed have a high degree of specificity, the personal efficiency can not have a high degree of generality; Bandura himself (1997) recommended that efficacy be studied at the most specific level possible, because the efficacy of an individual may vary according to the type of objective assumed. Thus, the personal efficiency for the teaching career presupposes different levels of analysis for those who are in the initial training stage compared to those whose training has been completed and are in the improvement phase.

In the case of students who have opted for the didactic career, personal efficiency involves assimilation and management of knowledge related to didactic interventions, the acquisition of appropriate attitudes, the ability to plan and practice effective behavior to achieve the desired outcome in a particular situation, to control events and situations which affects his life, expressing his or her own right expectations about his ability to perform certain tasks and activities, and anticipating the scale of efforts and perseverance required for the work (Calauz, 2012)

Learning at the beginning of their training, students form cognitive representations of action (intentions), motivate and guide their actions in anticipation of future events (anticipation) and evaluate their motivation, behavior, values and significance of life by linking them to their own goals (Nicklin, Williams, 2011). Thus, perceived self-efficacy is the general expectation the student develops about himself and believes he will bring success; this faith increases self-esteem and the will to develop (Yadak, 2017).

Along with the self-efficacy motivational role, it intervenes in self-regulation of behavior: through feedback provided either on performance normative standards or on performance discrepancies, it was a strong predictor of goal revision (Nicklin, Williams, 2011). The feed-backs received in the work carried out largely influence the future expectations of self-efficacy and change the optimism of investing in the future task (de la Vega et co 2012).

In this register, professional change and improvement would be strongly influenced not only by the perception of personal efficiency but also by the attitudinal beliefs, by the tendency of internal or external assignment of causality to achieve or not achieve the objectives. Those who believe that what happens to them is the result of their behaviors, capabilities and abilities they have an internal attribution style or an internal locus of control, while those who consider the events of their lives to be predominantly the result of external influences for which they have no control, make external assignments or have an external locus of control. Personal efficiency seems to be strongly influenced by these attributional tendencies. (Azizuddin, Fleva, Qaz, 2015)

In the case of teachers already trained, personal efficiency gains other coordinates, becomes more specific, is quantified mainly through the effectiveness of the teacher to influence or increase the level of student achievement, regardless of its characteristics or environment, (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 2001) together with other competences related to self-improvement, innovation, etc aspects that do not occur in the training phase (Dunn et co, 2013). Even in the case of already validated teachers, an important role in assessing their personal effectiveness plays the place of control: to whom it is due to personal success or failure in terms of the objective of increasing the level of its students' results (Icek , 2002) (Rotter, 1990)

These few variables that are related to personal efficiency for the teaching career will be taken into account for students in the training phase for this career.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The study aims at several objectives: to assess the level of personal effectiveness for the teaching career of students at the beginning of their professional training. The premise from which it has started is that choosing a profession is largely based on perceiving a reasonable level of future efficacy for that profession, even if this effectiveness has not been proven yet (1) Second, the study focuses on analyzing the subjective substantiation of this perceived competence based on several criteria: the cognitive, abilities and peculiarities of emotional functioning that students identify in self-knowledge (2a) skills and attitudes (2b) and types of internal or external attribution that they make in relation to success (2c). Last but not least, perceived personal effectiveness will be linked to cognitive, behavioral and emotional vulnerabilities (3a), attitudinal and aptitude vulnerabilities (3b) and the type of vulnerability attributions (3c) The premise that starts is that in this phase of professional training, the foundation of the perception of personal efficiency is based on factors that are predominantly affective, and to a lesser extent the cognitive factors and the skills to be tested. In the same register, perceiving personal efficiency is more strongly influenced by attitudes

than by the skills, and success assignments are rather internal while vulnerabilities are attributed externally.

### *2.2 Participants*

Study participants (N = 139) are students from the first year of study, from different specializations, at the Technical University of Cluj Napoca, North University Center in Baia Mare. All these students have opted for the module of psycho-pedagogical training for a possible future career option, and are at the end of the first semester of their didactic training (out of the six full-time training). All these students are at the end of the first semester (of the six) of the training for the didactic profession. Their specializations are varied, some have the sole teaching career goal, while other specializations have a didactic career as an alternative option, with different degrees of potential for a future teaching career. These specializations were divided into four categories: specialization with exclusively didactic purpose (pedagogy of primary and preschool education, Romanian Language and Literature), profession with major didactic goal (Mathematics, Biology, Language Chemistry and English and French Literature) with some didactic perspective (Theology, Informatics) and specialization with minimal didactic potential (Engineers, Economics)

### 2.3. Instruments and Procedures

A first step in the experiment was that the student was asked to indicate on a Likert scale from 1 to 10 the level of personal effectiveness for the teaching career, a career for which they opted for and started their training. For a more in-depth analysis of the results and for the analysis of how this structure of personal efficiency is structured, the students had to specify at least five strengths that they have and would recommend them for a didactic career, and also indicate minimum three vulnerabilities to pursue this career. These responses, both for qualities and vulnerabilities, were then coded in three categories. A first categorization of responses was made on the basis of belonging to the cognitive, affective or behavioral registry of the given answers, counting how many answers were given from each category analyzed. Then, a second data organization was made according to the attitudinal and aptitude registries, as in the previous case. The third classification was made according to the internal or external attribution for both strengths and vulnerabilities, found in the given answers.

As a statistical tools, media was used as an indicator for the level of personal effectiveness of the group; for the analysis of the trends of association between personal efficacy with personal qualities and vulnerabilities was used the correlation. In addition, were calculated differences between the averages obtained for cognitive, behavioral and affective, between the attitudes and skills assumed and between the internal / external attributions of the strengths and the vulnerabilities assumed for the didactic career.

### **3. Results and discussion**

In the case of the studied group, the level of personal effectiveness for the teaching profession, which the students at the beginning of the training have, indicates an average level of 7.42 (on a 10-step Likert scale). This level is very high, the trends that have been obtained confirm the hypothesis that the choice of a profession is based on the expectation of a high level of efficiency for that area: at the level of common sense, people are more likely to engage in performing activities for which feel efficient and neglect those for which they do not consider themselves as good (Abd-El-Fattah, 2015).

This expectation becomes a motivating mechanism and constitutes one of the explanatory variables for the educational and professional success of a high level of personal efficiency, a prophecy that fulfills (hypothesis 1).

An analysis of the variation of this level according to the chosen type of profession comes to tune the results obtained and to confirm the previously stated ones: there is a difference between the average of the personal effectiveness of those who have opted for specialization with exclusively didactic career (m=8,1) profession with major didactic (m=7,3) those with some didactic perspective (m=7,1) and specialization with minimal didactic potential (m=7,2). The differences between the averages between the four categories are not statistically significant, however, they must be considered at least as a trend.

After Bandura (1997), personal efficiency in general is a construct that gradually forms through the processing and cognitive integration of four main sources of information: personal successes and failures, observing the behaviors and benefits of others, recording the opinions of others about one's own person, and imagined performance (expectances and own desires).

The concept of efficiency for didactic career is crystallized on the basis of qualities already proven in previous educational cycles through the achieved performances, based on them, future projections, the result of these processes being permanently subjected to reanalysis and reconfiguration as the projections materialize. In the case of the present study group, the evaluation of the level of personal efficiency is mainly based on the performances already proved, without the existence of a concrete applicative feed back. The study aims to analyze the favorable and disadvantageous factors - cognitions, emotional characteristics and abilities, attitudes and skills used by students in building personal efficiency and to what extent these factors are attributed to personal characteristics or context (internal or external attributions)

From the analysis of the obtained data it can be seen that most of the strengths that students build their perception of personal effectiveness belong to the register of emotional competences (an average of 2.97 competences) (eg good empathy, positive, etc.) followed by the behavioral performance register (with an average of 1.1) (eg, communicate with ease, have experience in managing conflict situations) and only the last place the cognitive attributes that the subjects have are mentioned (average 0.61) (have a good logical functioning or good analytical capability, etc.). The obtained results are statistically relevant, and between the three analyzed categories there are significant differences for a significance threshold of 0.000 in (Table 1)

Table no 1. Differences between the average of the numbers of strengths assumed for the teaching career in the registers: cognitive, affective, behavioral, attitude and aptitude

Diferente între media numerelor de puncte forte asumate pentru cariera didactica din registrele: cognitiv, afectiv, comportamental, atitudinal si aptitudinal

Comparing categories	Average differences		
Cognitive-competence-emotional skills	-2,36	14,704	,000
Cognitive competencies-behavioral competencies	-0,496	4,692	,000
Emotional skills - practical skills	1,863	1,020	,000
Attitudes - Skills	2,525	2,549	,000

The results are not surprising, on the one hand, given the time of their assessment, before any kind of feed back from the exams in the training period (for cognitive skills), and before any confrontation with the profession itself (for the behavioral register). On the other hand, the emotional characteristics are the most subjective, the most difficult to prove and consequently the most resistant to feed-back so that characterization with such qualities in this register is the easiest.. Last but not least, the usual vocabulary has many more words describing emotional states and competences than words describing cognitive and behavioral skills, making it much easier to activate it (2a).

It would be interesting to capture the dynamics of cognitive, behavioral and affective aspects during professional training - to what extent the assimilation of information from the registers of psychology, pedagogy, didactics and pedagogical practice leads to changes in the terms in which personal efficiency is crystallized. An increased and correct (validated) level of perceived personal effectiveness should include a more sustained cognitive and behavioral foundation that will give greater stability to this construct and a more accurate ability to interpret feedback received.

Similarly, the analysis of the relationship between the attitudes 'number and those of the attitudes' assumed for the didactic career indicates an advance of the number of attitudes (with an average of the 3.61 group of attitudes highlighted) in the face of aptitudes with an average of 1.09. And here for this analysis the difference is statistically significant for a significance threshold of 0.000. As in the previous case, this is justifiable by all three of the above-mentioned arguments - the subjectivity of the evaluation, the difficulty of probing and the frequency of the terms used for their expression (2b).

Table no 2. Differences between the average of the number of weak points assumed for the teaching career in the registers: cognitive, affective, behavioral, attitude and aptitude

Comparing categories	Average differences		
Cognitive-competence-emotional skills	-1,851	10,962	,000
Cognitive competencies-behavioral competencies	-0,551	4,672	,000
Emotional skills - practical skills	1,413	,641	,000
Attitudes - Skills	1,800	0,549	,000

The results of vulnerabilities go alongside those of strengths - an advance of emotional skills and attitudes to the detriment of cognitive, behavioral and abilities (hypotheses 3a and 3b). (eg, very high emotionality and shyness are often claimed but very rarely mentioned are cognitive or behavioral difficulties).As a tendency, the explanations already given may also be valid here, it is self-knowledge and self-evaluation through emotional and attitudinal gradients.

The analysis of the types of attributions made in the case of success indicates that the potential success is mostly given by the number of personal qualities (they have good verbal fluency, communication ability, they are passionate about teaching material, etc.) (media = 4, 64) over the number of contextual factors (the teaching material is easy or lucky) (average of 0.04).The difference between the two types of attributions is significantly reduced when it comes to attributing vulnerabilities that

students perceive for the didactic profession (an average of 1.79 internal attributions and  $m = 1$  for external attributions) (hypotheses 2c and 3c)

Table no 3. Differences between the number of internal / external attributions of strengths and didactic vulnerabilities

Comparing categories	Diferenta de medie		
Internal / External Assignments of Success	4,59	9,994	,000
Internal / External Assignments of Vulnerabilities	0,79	,312	,000
Internal assignments of success and vulnerabilities	2,84	9,166	,000
Atribuire externe ale succesului si vulnerabilitatilor	-0,95	,284	,000

The differences between the attributions made (summarized in Table 3), both internal and external, both for success and for vulnerabilities, indicate high statistical significance, which means that in the formation and crystallization of the perception of personal competence the principles of self-image preservation are important (Heider 1958 apud Baumeister, Bushman, 2008); the most pronounced tendency observed is the assumption of taking credit for succes, while the vulnerabilities are outsourcing of them.

The correlation trends of the number of cognitive, affective and behavioral, attitudinal and aptitude coordinates, assumed as strengths for the teaching career, of the internal and external attribution styles, together with the perception of personal efficiency, are summarized in Table 4

Table no 4. Trends of association of variables analyzed as success factors and self efficacy

corelation	Perceived self efficacy for teaching	self for	Succes cognitions	Succes emotions	Succes behaviors	Succes attitudes	Succes skills	Internal attribution	External attribution
Perceived self efficacy for teaching	1	-	,169* p=0,049	-	-	-	-	-	-
Succes cognitions	-	1	-	-,538** p=0,000	-	-,387** p=0,000	,597* p=0,000*	-	-
Succes emotions			1	-	-,458** p=0,000	,712** p=0,000	-,505** p=0,000	,385** p=0,000	-
Succes behaviors				1	-	,403** p=0,000	,263** p=0,000	-	-
Succes attitude					1	-	-,688** p=0,000	,577** p=0,000	-,172* p=0,048
Succes skills						1	-	-	-
Internal attribution								1	-,464** p=0,000

From the analysis of the data presented in the table above, the number of emotional competencies indicated as success factors tends to be associated with most of the analyzed variables: thus increasing the number of such competencies assumed correlates positively with the number of success attitudes mentioned and with the tendency of internal attribution of success, and negatively correlates with the number of assumed cognitive skills, with the number of successful behaviors and with the assumed abilities. Similarly, the number of cognitive competencies nominated as strengths correlates positively and significantly only with the number of skills highlighted as

success factors. In other respects, the perception of personal effectiveness correlates positively only with the number of emotional competences, being indifferent to the variance tendencies of the other analyzed variables.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The starting point in the training for the teaching career of students is characterized by relatively high appreciation of personal efficiency, this high level being the projection of previous performances of the new career, as well as causal motivation for the option made. The correctness of this perception is to be validated by assimilation of knowledge and the formation of cognitive, emotional and behavioral competences, of the necessary attitudes and skills and by adjusting the correct attributions to take into account only a few of the factors that compete for the real increase of the didactic professional competence. In assessing one's own competence, it starts mainly from emotional and attitudinal factors, and less from cognitive and aptitudinal factors, and the attributions of the strong points are internal, while in the case of vulnerabilities, the internal and external attributions seem to balance. Each of these tendencies betrays an inadequate self-knowledge that is required to be refined to build an authentic personal effectiveness and objectives with the metacognition valence of regulating the performance.

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